



A Rumi Retreat with Andrew Harvey, Stroud, April 2018

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At Hawkwood College in Stroud from 20 to the 22 April 2018, the world-class teacher Andrew Harvey led a retreat where he diagnosed the world as descending into chaos, ring-led by the king of chaos, Donald Trump. 'Humanity will have to choose suicide or salvation', he said. Now, at one minute to midnight, 'the God of unbelievable mercy' will use the brave heartbroken ones to create miracles through compassion and justice.

'Follow your heartbreak' – whether it's what's happening to the earth or animals. Andrew urged us to claim our divine origin and have the guts to 'turn up' and act outside of our comfort zone. England is 'a nation of polite mice', and needs sacred activism to effect change. He suggested we form networks of grace – six or more. 'The days of individual glory are over.' We need to create Rumi fields and practise, as the Sufis do, remembrance of the Divine.

In wonderful pyrotechnics of language, Andrew told the story of Rumi's meeting with Shams of Tabriz. In 1244, Rumi travelled a thousand miles to Konya, and the two men, both spiritual teachers, fell into each other's arms and sobbed. It was the lover meeting the Beloved – each one was the lover and each one the Beloved. A rapport stronger and stranger than master-disciple.

When, after three years of sacred friendship, Shams disappeared after a death threat from Rumi's son, Rumi plunged into grief and, three years later, began to write the ecstatic poetry we know today. The gist of it is that the grapes of the old self must surrender to being trampled to make divine wine.

On the evening when Andrew read his translations of Rumi, there was thunder and lightning during the most passionate passages. Afterwards, poet and fellow sacred activist Jay Ramsay said, 'That was well organized', to which Andrew replied, 'I was afraid they wouldn't turn up'. His spontaneous wit punctuated the retreat. He compared Rumi to an A&E doctor who climbs on to the one whose heart has stopped and pounds it to start it beating.

One of the most poignant things Andrew said was that men in wartime have been known to die to save each other. And that it we

had this intense friendship between men in peacetime, it would change the world.

Andrew gave us this map for the journey into our authentic Self:

- (1) The Summons – this comes often after loss or betrayal.
- (2) Becoming a Lover – the ego can become inflated here and play with its power. Some 92 per cent of gurus stay at this stage. Do we choose what the ego wants, or do we serve the Beloved? This is where we can go into a Dark Night. 'We are now in a global Dark Night.'
- (3) The freeing of the individual Self – blasted by trauma, dismantled by the Divine, we become spacious and embark on a life of grace and service.
- (4) We enter the enlightenment field – this is endless, and the key is humility and service.

The bottom line of the whole event was: Keep serving at a time of terminal disaster. Create a heart large enough to hold the agony of the whole world. The more we burn away our stuff the more the Beloved can live in us.

Andrew's passion and humour brought us to tears and laughter. And all that crying and laughing played havoc with our mascara.